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**IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE**

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In re Patent Application of

ASHLEY et al.

Atty. Ref.: 124-810

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January 4, 2001

*09743039*

Assistant Commissioner for Patents  
Washington, DC 20231

Sir:

**PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT**

In order to place the above-identified application in better condition for examination, please amend the application as follows:

**IN THE CLAIMS**

Claim 3, line 1, delete "or claim 2".

Claim 4, line 1, change "any one of the preceding claims" to --claim 1--.

Claim 5, line 1, change "any one of the preceding claims" to --claim 1--.

Claim 6, line 1, change "any one of the preceding claims" to --claim 1--.

Claim 7, line 2, change "any one of the preceding claims" to --claim 1--.

Claim 11, line 1, delete "or claim 10".

Claim 12, line 1, change "any one of claims 9 to 11" to --claim 9--.